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DOI:

[10.1080/17508061.2017.1422895](https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2017.1422895)

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Berry, C., & Shujuan, Z. (2019). Film and fashion in Shanghai: What (not) to wear during the cultural revolution. *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2017.1422895>

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Film and Fashion in Shanghai:  
What (Not) to Wear during the Cultural Revolution

By Chris Berry and Zhang Shujuan

*Abstract*

Recent scholarship has challenged the assumption that China was an ocean of drab sartorial uniformity during the Cultural Revolution decade. This essay extends this tendency by asking what role cinema played in people's choices about what to wear. Based on data gathered in group interviews in Shanghai, it finds several tendencies: revolutionary history films inspired contemporary military-style clothing, but not only for political reasons; foreign films screened during the Cultural Revolution built up a mental archive of contemporary international fashion that was drawn up on as the strictures of the era were relaxed in the 1970s; and memories of films screened before 1966 provided another mental archive of retro-fashion possibilities, also drawn on as strictures were relaxed. Overall, our research demonstrates that even though socio-political frameworks always condition individual agency, even in the most difficult of times, individual agency continues to be exercised in the interstices of everyday life.

*Keywords:* Fashion, Cultural Revolution, individual agency, qipao, military uniform

*Introduction*

“People said wearing pointed shoes was bourgeois thinking.” (Weng Shaofen, interviewee)

Living in today's highly consumerist market economies, we are used to deciding what to wear and how to present ourselves in response to commercial fashion, which is promoted to us through magazines, advertisements, and movie tie-ins.<sup>1</sup> But what resources did people draw in the centrally planned economies of the high socialist era? Was the cinema important? And did people simply copy the models given to them, or was there a more active process of negotiation? This essay explores this question by focusing on the Cultural Revolution "decade of chaos" (1966-1976) in the People's Republic of China. In a sense, this era is a limit case. First, as we outline below, both inside and outside China the general impression about clothing and self-presentation during the Cultural Revolution remains one of drab uniformity. Furthermore, feature film production came to almost a complete halt for several of those ten years and never regained its pre-1966 heights of production until after 1976.<sup>2</sup> In these circumstances, the Cultural Revolution would seem to be the most unpromising part of a generally unpromising era for the investigation of links between fashion and film in China. Yet, it is precisely this decade on which our study focuses, because, if people used films as a fashion resource during the Cultural Revolution, perhaps it is fair to assume they did so throughout the 1949-1976 Mao era.

To answer our question, we cannot turn to newspapers and magazines from the time. All media were subject to particularly strong ideological controls during the Cultural Revolution. Fashion itself was officially regarded as bourgeois throughout the Mao era. While the media provided plenty of model peasants, soldiers and workers, there is no record of any response other than direct emulation in the prescribed manner. Therefore, we decided to interview Shanghai citizens who were in their youth during the Cultural Revolution. Of course, as China's allegedly most Western city,<sup>3</sup> Shanghai is a special place, and national generalizations cannot be spun out

from what happened there based on a small number of interviews. Nonetheless, our results show that the cinema was important and that people were active in making decisions about what to wear. However, despite the prevalence of emulation culture in Maoist China, people rarely if ever set out to dress exactly like someone they had seen on the screen. Rather, screen fashions formed part of a cultural catalogue of possibilities that they might draw upon when and where possible and appropriate. Indeed, our research reveals a surprising range and variety in how and why people drew on the cinema to help them decide how to dress and present themselves at a time when, it is often supposed, they had no choice about either what to wear or what to watch. This raises questions about agency and resistance, which we turn to throughout the paper.

### *The Significance of Fashion in the Cultural Revolution*

“I didn’t wear military-style jacket because the colour was nice, but because it was trendy, it was sharp, and it was fitted.” (Liu Yutian, interviewee)

Our project participates in three overlapping academic fields: film and fashion; fashion in the People’s Republic of China; and understanding the Cultural Revolution. The connections between cinema and clothing are a well-established field of research by now. Ever since Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog’s groundbreaking anthology, *Fabrications*, was published in 1990,<sup>4</sup> a steady stream of studies has followed. These analyses range from cinema’s role in promoting clothing styles as part of national culture<sup>5</sup> merge references at end of sentence to the role of costume in cinematic narratives and the crafting of star personas.<sup>6</sup> However, so far the field remains resolutely Eurocentric, focusing on Hollywood in particular. It takes the market

economy, consumerism, and mass production that characterize the West for granted. By looking at Maoist China, we aim to extend the field of enquiry not only geographically and culturally but also conceptually, by looking at a very different economic and cultural formation -- one where the economy was planned, consumerism did not exist, and mass production was still relatively unusual in the realm of clothing.

Indeed, precisely because of the absence of a market economy during its early history and the ideological stance against fashion as bourgeois, many people may still assume that the People's Republic of China in the Maoist period is not a fruitful site for the study of fashion. Until relatively recently, even Chinese histories of clothing and fashion more or less ignored the Mao era from 1949 to 1976 as a desert of drab uniformity, with fashion only becoming relevant again with the embrace of the market economy beginning in the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> Yet, studies of other countries have already shown that, under the banner of "to each according to their needs," socialism did not necessarily preclude consumerism, fashion or even haute couture.<sup>8</sup> Although none of these elements were features of life in the Mao era, more recent research on clothing in the People's Republic of China has also struck out against the common image of sexless and drab uniformity. This challenges us to see fashion even where official rhetoric maintained it did not exist.

For example, in "Dressing for the Party," which covers the period between the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949 and the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Tina Mai Chen has made the distinction between the "seasonal fashion time" of market capitalism and "campaign time." As a result, gender-differentiated fashion trends in the People's Republic followed political changes, class types, and social roles.<sup>9</sup> Even the so-called "Mao suit," which in Chinese is called the "Sun Yat-sen suit" (*Zhongshan zhuang*), was far from a

uniform. There were numerous variations, largely the result of the individual's choice and income: blue, grey, or green colours; cotton, wool, or other materials; two, three, or four pockets; hidden or patch pockets; waist darts or not, and so on. Tailor's patterns reveal that sometimes the trousers for women's Mao suits buttoned at the sides.<sup>10</sup> There was also a double-breasted suit with a turned down collar called the "Lenin suit" (*Liening zhuang*), which was introduced for women in the 1950s.<sup>11</sup>

In this rapidly growing field of research on the diversity of fashion during the Maoist era, it is widely acknowledged that the media played a crucial role in showing people what to wear. The idea that the media were the "mouthpiece" (*houshe*, literally "throat and tongue") of the party-state was the official line during this period,<sup>12</sup> as was the political pedagogical role of literature and the arts.<sup>13</sup> Consistent representations of model worker, peasant and soldier citizens were promoted for emulation, and in practice this emulation naturally extended to what they wore. Chen, for example, points out that, after the socialist martyr Lei Feng was put forward for emulation in 1963, in pictures he consistently "wore the army green jacket with red tabbed collar, brown leather belt, and soft cloth cap with red star insignia." The adoption of the military uniform by this socialist supermodel promoted the fashion for military uniforms among the young.<sup>14</sup> In her chapter on clothing during the Cultural Revolution, Antonia Finnane points out that the craze took off among the young when Mao himself was photographed and filmed dressed in military uniform instead of his usual "Mao suit" when he met the Red Guards in Tiananmen Square on 18 August 1966.<sup>15</sup>

However, although provision of models by the media during the Maoist heyday, including the Cultural Revolution, is widely acknowledged, how and why ordinary citizens responded has not been subject to much direct study yet. As far as we know, this is the first effort

to understand whether and why people appropriated fashions from the cinema during the Cultural Revolution. On the basis of our research discussed below, we argue below that rather than trying to look exactly like Lei Feng -- which might have seemed either offensive or ridiculous -- Lei Feng's image (including his image in the biopic about him) joined other heroic military imagery circulating in popular visual culture to form a catalogue that people drew upon in fashioning their own individual military looks.

Implicit in this project is the assumption that people may not simply copy what they see in the cinema because they have been told to. As such, it contributes to the recent trend to return to the Cultural Revolution and develop a more complex and less monolithic understanding of it. In his essay, "The 1989 Social Movement and the Historical Roots of China's Neoliberalism," Wang Hui observes that "...repudiating the Cultural Revolution has become the guardian of the dominant ideology as well as of state policy, and this mode of thinking has flourished ever since: any criticism directed against the present can be cast as regression to the Cultural Revolution, and thus as being wholly irrational."<sup>16</sup> Alain Badiou and Alessandro Russo note that the Cultural Revolution "is bathed in an aura of phantasmagoric horror and ultimately in an atmosphere of ignorance and superstition. . . . There is no comparable example to the serious intellectual paralysis that strikes the disciplines institutionally charged to organize research on political and historical events when confronted by the Cultural Revolution. . ."<sup>17</sup> However, so far most of the work that has resulted has focused on reassessment of the directly political, ranging from Party politics to Red Guard activities and Maoism overseas.<sup>18</sup> There has been less effort to address the everyday and how everyday life was affected by and responded to the events of the Cultural Revolution.

However, in her path-breaking essay on clothing during the Cultural Revolution, Verity Wilson points in this direction when she reports a similar frustration to Wang Hui and Alain Badiou's with stereotyped reductions of life during the Cultural Revolution to a series of horror stories.<sup>19</sup> Of course, there is no doubt that there were plenty of horror stories during the Cultural Revolution, and some were even fashion-related. In her memoir about the era in Shanghai, Nien Cheng remembers witnessing at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution decade a young woman being seized on the street and stripped of her pointed shoes and tight slacks.<sup>20</sup> As well as citing Cheng's memoir, Antonia Finnane also gives the example of Wang Guangmei, wife of President Liu Shaoqi. A documentary had circulated after she and Liu visited Indonesia. In it, she appeared wearing a fitted *qipao* dress (also known as cheongsam) and pearls at a state dinner. When she was struggled in 1967, she was made to wear a similar dress and a mocking necklace made out of ping-pong balls.<sup>21</sup>

During our research, some of our interviewees reported similar stories, with tight slacks and pointed shoes featuring consistently as targets of criticism. Ms. Chen, who participated in our first group session, had recently begun working at a textile factory when the Cultural Revolution broke out. "From our hair to our clothes, our shoes, and even our trousers, we couldn't just wear what we wanted," she recalled. If people turned up with pointed shoes on, "they made you to take them off, and they either made you wear them round your neck or leave them outside and come in barefoot." "People said wearing pointed shoes was bourgeois thinking," explained Ms. Weng Shaofen, whose father had been a Kuomintang Nationalist official before the revolution and was therefore considered to have a bad class background.<sup>22</sup> She recalled a classmate whose father had also been a Kuomintang official, made the mistake of wearing tight white slacks. "She was made to stand outside the school gate as a negative example



of bourgeois thinking,” Weng Shaofen remembered. “They even used her father’s background against her. We were all terrified.”

However, despite the kind of close monitoring reported by Ms. Chen and Ms. Weng Shaofen, as Verity Wilson points out, within the constraints imposed, people still had to decide what to wear every day.<sup>23</sup> Examining people’s decisions about what to wear and their motivations for doing so can lead us to an understanding of hitherto relatively ignored question of how everyday life was conducted during the Cultural Revolution. Rather than thinking that people are simply either free or oppressed, we can see how they exercised agency in a time when resistance and even the adoption of alternative cultures were impossible without very severe consequences. In this era of conformity, precisely because everything shown in the cinema had been passed by the censors, it was a relatively safe source of approved clothing, hairstyles, and so forth during such a risky era. But, as our research indicates, that does not mean to say that everyone appropriated the same things in exactly the same ways, or that they were motivated by a desire to demonstrate political loyalty, even though they might have appeared to be doing so. Furthermore, clothing and other fashion trends varied over time.

### *The Research Process*

“If we got a military uniform and wanted to smarten it up a bit, in the sixties there were false collars for white shirts.” (Mr. Shen, interviewee)

Our research was conducted in the form of group interviews in Shanghai in July of 2011. One of us (Zhang) lives in Shanghai, while the other visits. In preparation for a time when we

would both be in Shanghai, potential interviewees of suitable age were identified and contacted through conversations with Zhang's neighbours and the friends of her neighbours in the Yangpu District of Shanghai. In addition to the particular character of Shanghai, other biases may have resulted from this process. First, our interviewees were self-selecting, and, given the nature of the project, likely to be people with more interest in fashion and in films than others. Second, due to the researchers' inability to speak Shanghai dialect, our interviewees had to be comfortable in Mandarin, which may mean they were more educated than the average.

Our interviewees were encouraged to bring photos and other memorabilia from the Cultural Revolution era with them to the interviews. We decided to conduct the interviews in two groups of about seven people, rather than individual interviews. It was our hope that this group interview procedure would promote informal conversation, memories, and discussion amongst our interviewees, and in this we were successful. We decided to go with fairly large groups out of worry that our interviewees might be reluctant to speak when they were being recorded, and that they might be inhibited in the presence of a foreigner whom they were meeting for the first time (Berry). As it turns out, we need not have worried on either count. Indeed, at times they were so eager that everyone spoke at once, creating a challenge for the transcription procedure.

The first group consisted of seven women, all of whom attended the Seniors College on Yangzhou Road in Yangpu. Their ages ranged from fifty-seven to sixty-five, meaning they would have been between twelve and twenty years old when the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, and between twenty-two and thirty when it was declared over in 1976. Their class, education and work backgrounds varied greatly, ranging from someone with close associations with the old ruling elite from before the revolution to former factory workers and to young women who had been sent or volunteered to go down to the countryside during some of the

Cultural Revolution. We conducted the interview as an afternoon tea at the College, which kindly allowed us to use a room with audiovisual equipment. This enabled us to show some clips as talking points and to stimulate memory, which we will give more details about later.

Our second group was drawn from some people who gathered to sing early every morning in Lu Xun Park in Hongkou District, next door to Yangpu. We hired a room in a nearby karaoke bar, so that we could show them the same clips, and we set up a morning tea for them after their singing. This was a mixed group of men and women, of a similar age to the first group. However, while the first group interview went very smoothly indeed, the dynamics in the second group were more complex. In retrospect, two elements may account for the complications. First, putting the genders together created some initial inhibition. Previously loquacious women became quiet in the presence of men, who suddenly were not so keen to show an interest in clothing in the presence of women. Second, a couple of curious friends drifted along from the morning singing exercises, and, in her role as our hostess, the owner of the karaoke bar also came in and out and participated in the interview. None of these people had been briefed and selected for the group interview, and so their contributions were not always on-theme. Furthermore, this resulted in a greater range of class and educational difference than for the first group. However, this more difficult situation was also productive in its own way. Two of the men in the interview struggled to dominate the situation, leading the one with less social status to speak more about how he used clothing to present himself during the Cultural Revolution and in the process provoking a more open discussion among all the participants.

In addition to the two group interviews, we also interviewed Liu Debao and his wife, Ma Yulan. Liu is known as Shanghai's "Red Collector." He was a teenage Red Guard in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution and now has an extensive private collection of posters,

newspapers, and over 3,600 film prints from the 1949 to 1976 period, with a particular focus on the Cultural Revolution era. Unless their bad class background blocked it, most of our interviewees would have participated in the political movements of the Cultural Revolution, and often as Red Guards. Two factors distinguish Liu Debao from the others in this regard. First, he was more active than most, having been selected twice as a representative to go from Shanghai and join the crowds that met Mao in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Second, he continues to show a strong interest in the period and its politics, whereas for most of our participants this is a forgotten era they were returning to talk about after a long gap. However, as with our other interviewees, we focused on Liu and Ma's individual memories and experiences of everyday life, clothing and the cinema, rather than their opinions about the politics of the time, and they were as forthcoming and informative as our other interviewees.

Broadly speaking, despite their differences in class, age, and gender, there were no large differences in our interviewees' memories about film and fashion during the Cultural Revolution, and there were no major disagreements about what happened when. Indeed, in many cases what was said during one interview was spontaneously confirmed without any prompting from us in other interviews. The material we gathered both confirmed and extended other general work on fashion during the Cultural Revolution, revealing a realm of individual agency within the constraints of the time. In what follows, we group our findings about the particular role of film as a resource that people drew on into three sections. First, we look at the well-known craze for military-style clothing, especially during the height of the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1968. As Liu Debao pointed out to us, "It was a youth thing. Older people just continued with their existing lifestyle." We argue that while military-style clothing was widely adopted among youth and they drew upon popular visual culture images, there were many individual variations

in the type of military clothing people favoured and that this was mostly not the result of their political affiliations. After the initial fervour ebbed, other fashions became possible for young people in the early 1970s. Our second section looks at foreign films. We find that in Shanghai, films from Albania and Romania became the preferred sources for information about European fashion during the Cultural Revolution decade. In our third section, we consider the role of Chinese dramatic feature films, which reappeared alongside the model opera and ballet films in the early 1970s. Here, a complex picture emerges. It is partly composed of new feature films set in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which encouraged memories of the styles of that era and updated versions of them. And it is partly composed of memories of even earlier films, which were still screened as exemplary left-wing films during our respondents' childhoods after the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. After the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, public screenings of these films ceased and they became objects of criticism in "internal reference screenings."<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, memories of them also formed a resource for our interviewees to draw on.

### *Uniforms and Diversity during the Cultural Revolution*

"If you wore a real military cap, it meant your family were either officials or soldiers." (Liu Yutian, interviewee)

Our readings and meetings with prospective interviewees enabled us to identify three different types of film repertoires that people remembered circulating during the Cultural Revolution decade: pre-1966 revolutionary war history and post-1966 "model opera" and "model

ballet” films set during the revolutionary wars; foreign films from North Korea, Albania, and Romania; and new Chinese feature films produced after 1973, some set in the early 1960s. As mentioned before, we selected a clip for each set of films as a way of getting the conversation going for our interviewees.<sup>25</sup> Each of these different sets of films corresponded to types of clothing: the first set to the fashion for military-style clothing that was especially strong among young people in the first years of the Cultural Revolution; the second set to observing European fashions for cutting edge new and “modern” ideas; and the third to the return of non-military clothing in the early 1970s.

When the Cultural Revolution was launched in 1966, feature film production came to a halt as most film studio staff members were sent for re-education. But approved revolutionary war history films such as *Tunnel Warfare* (*Didao zhan*, 1965) and *Guerillas on the Plain* (*Pingyuan youjidui*, 1958) continued to circulate.<sup>26</sup> In addition there were numerous documentaries and newsreel films, in which audiences could clearly see Mao appearing in military uniform, as well as other popular military themes. Revolutionary war history also provided the setting for almost all the “model operas” (*yangbanxi*) produced during the Cultural Revolution and the films adapted from them that began to appear around 1970. Therefore, to remind our interviewees of the broad visual popular culture that promoted the military style, we selected a striking clip from the film of the model opera *Azalea Mountain* (*Dujuan shan*, 1974), in which the heroine Ke Xiang appears in with a gun in a holster worn over a tightly tailored top with cloth buttons that button diagonally across the top, a traditional garment associated with rural areas.

Almost everyone who writes on fashion during this period notes Mao’s famous saying on the topic:

These well-groomed heroines carry five-foot rifles,  
On this parade ground in the first rays of the sun,  
Daughters of China have uncommon aspirations,  
Preferring battle-tunics to red dresses.<sup>27</sup>

The description here is of women militia, whose typical clothing mixed items such as the gun and holster with civilian clothing, much like that worn by Ke Xiang in *Azalea Mountain*<sup>28</sup> (See Figure 1). Here, clothing is part of a whole ensemble of elements composing, as Simmel puts it in his seminal essay, “fashion in all fields, by no means only apparel.” This includes gesture, décor, speech, and general mode of self-presentation.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, many of our interviewees had photos from the time of themselves not only dressed in military-style clothing of various kinds, but also in some cases even making a special effort to mimic scenes from model stage works down to the setting and pose (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. Ke Xiang in *Azalea Mountain*. [We'll need the figures in separate files, in the best resolution you may have](#)

Figure 2. Ms. Chen from our first group of interviewees, in a photo mimicking the heroine Wu Qionghua from the model ballet, *The Red Detachment of Women*, including her long braid and a setting amongst palm trees appropriate to the setting of the model work on the tropical island of Hainan. Ms. Chen told us that she coated the soles of her hand-made cloth shoes with rubber, so that they would be strong enough for her to stand *en pointe*.

As noted above, many of the films that featured military stories were set during the revolutionary wars that led to the eventual establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. This suggests that other scholars are correct with they observe a retro element to this military fashion. Finnane claims that this retro style is political in significance: "For girls, military dress and a military persona meant identification with a Maoist revolutionary tradition going back to before the founding of the Communist Party."<sup>30</sup>

However, expressions of loyalty and a desire to emulate their heroic forefathers may not have been the only motivations for putting on uniform. Perhaps partly because of the passing of the years and the fundamental changes in values, none of our interviewees talked about adopting military fashion for these reasons. Indeed, the women were eager to tell us how military fashion enabled them to show off their figures. They pointed out that unlike most civilian clothing at this time, military uniforms were tailored to the body. Ms. Liu Yutian in our first group of interviewees is a tall woman who still has a very svelte figure. She leapt up to show us where the darts were in her military jacket. "The way I thought about it back then was that I didn't wear military-style jacket because the colour was nice," she explained, "but because it was trendy, it was sharp, and it was fitted." The wide military belt was also a popular accessory because it accentuated a slim waist.

In our second group, some of the men were also keen on the way military uniforms made them look "smart." Mr. Shen explained, "If we got a military uniform and wanted to smarten it up a bit, in the sixties there were false collars for white shirts. You'd do the buttons on the jacket up and have a bit of the white from the collar showing. Somehow it made you look sharp. It was hard to get your hands on a new shirt back then, and so we had those false collars." "You've seen



*Street Angel* [Malu Tianshi],” Ms. Lu in the same group elaborated, referring to the 1930s film that circulated long after the 1949 Revolution. “When the actor Zhao Dan in that film takes his jacket off, he’s wearing a false collar. His is long, like a half-shirt, but later it was just a collar.”

These Shanghai memories of wearing military-style clothing to look smart are rather different from, for example, Rae Yang’s memories of her Red Guard group’s adoption of military style as way of marking out their particular sense of belonging: “People noticed our new costume: faded army uniforms that had been worn by our parents, red armbands, wide canvas army belts, army caps, the peaks pulled down low by girls in the style of the boys.”<sup>31</sup> From these examples of how people adopted the military look, we can see beneath the seeming conformity of the uniform, there were a variety of ways of wearing it and reasons for doing so. Even in these times of very restricted choices, a tension between uniformity and diversity and between following and initiating continues.

Other scholars have noted that a tension between conformity and difference is inherent to uniforms. Tina Mai Chen notes that uniforms give both uniformity and hierarchy, for example, by marking rank.<sup>32</sup> During the Cultural Revolution, with ranks and insignia abolished in 1965, a more complex pattern emerged. As Wilson observes, military uniforms were taking on a more egalitarian and civilian look just when civilian clothing was converging on military styles.<sup>33</sup> However, as we will discuss later, real military uniforms were still associated with concrete social status. Therefore, the kind of diversity our interviewees told us about was in many cases about their efforts to stand out from the crowd at the same time as they joined it, and was a result of individual agency exercised within the boundaries set by the times. As noted above, they saw people punished for wearing the wrong clothes at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. As a

result, they understood the limits of what could be worn in public and that those limits would be enforced. Ms. Weng Shaofen also understood that these limits were class and power-differentiated. When she started working for a publisher, she had a colleague who liked to dress up, even though it was the middle of the Cultural Revolution. But, “her father was a policeman, so no one said anything.” On the other hand, with a clear understanding from the mass media of what was prescribed and what was criticised and risky, there was space left in-between for personal choices about what kind of revolutionary fashion to wear.<sup>34</sup> And rather than simply emulating models blindly, our interviewees adopted and appropriated various visual elements to assemble their own military/revolutionary looks (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figures 3 & 4, Ms. Weng Shaofen (Figure 3) and Ms. Lin Rongfang (Figure 4) from our first interview group. Here the little red book, or the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, was an item which lent our interviewees in these photos revolutionary credentials even without a uniform. Furthermore, its adoption often demanded certain body language, and even the low camera angle that was mostly deployed for revolutionary models in popular visual media.

This diversity was further facilitated by the clothing culture of the time. First, as Iris Hopf points out, before the late 1970s most clothing in China was either hand-made in the home or stitched by the local tailor out of fabric supplied by the customer, and buying off the rack was very rare. The paradox here is that at a time when most people think everyone dressed the same, the very conditions of the production of clothing almost ensured that everyone was dressing somewhat differently and a degree of individualization was almost inevitable.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, there were no army surplus stores in China and one could not just go and buy a genuine military uniform. Our interviewees confirmed that real items of military uniform were the most desirable items. If you could get your hands on the real thing, “it meant you were quite something!” Mr. Wang from our second group exclaimed. “Either your family were officials or in the military.” At a time when certain classes were being attacked, access to a real uniform was a new marker of social status. Ms. Xu in our first interview group was able to get her military uniform because of family connections. Her elder brother was in a construction brigade in Xinjiang in Chinese central Asia. “When I put it on, everyone said I looked great. All my clothes hung straight and loose then, but the uniform had a waist and it was very smart. At night, I’d put the pants under the pillow to make the crease sharper.” However, not everyone depended on family connections. “I was lucky,” said Liu Debao. “I had a neighbour who had just left the military. He heard that I was one of two delegates from our class selected to go and see Chairman Mao in Beijing. He was so happy for me that he lent me a complete uniform.”

Genuine uniforms were hard to come by. Therefore, most people either made their clothes themselves or depended on the local tailor for a military-style jacket (*junbianfu*). “I worked in a clothing factory then, so I made all the family’s clothes,” Ms. Lin Rongfang from our first interview group said. “We had a senior worker in the factory who helped me to cut the cloth properly, and then I took it home and sewed it myself. There was plenty of military uniform cloth to buy in the shops, because there were lots of off-cuts on sale then. I ran up clothes at home from morning to night. I wore military-style clothing through most of those years in the sixties, because I was in the neighbourhood song and dance troupe. We’d put on shows during the day and rehearse in the evening.”

Ms. Chen, who worked in a textile factory, told us her uniform had been given to her because she was on the song and dance troupe in her factory. “But I didn’t think it was authentic,” she explained. “The style was the same, but the fabric was different. I think it was canvas.” Ms. Weng Shaofen added “The buttons on real uniforms were different, too. They had ‘8.1.’ on them,” or, in other words, “August 1,” the symbol of the People’s Liberation Army. “That’s how we told if it was a fake,” Ms. Xu chipped in, “We’d look at your buttons.” In the second group, our interviewees also told us that real military uniforms had a military stamp on them. According to Mr. Shen, “If someone said your cap was fake, you’d take it off and show them the stamp.” However, that did not happen very often, because, as our interviewees agreed, real military clothing and military-style clothing were easily told apart. As Tina Mai Chen notes, “a superficial uniformity of clothing was, in fact, marked by difference according to whether or not one wore an original uniform, the replica, the partial elements of one, or simply imitated the style.”<sup>36</sup> However, making and wearing military-style clothing despite these difficulties only underlines how powerful this youth fashion was as part of the overall lifestyle in the early days of the Cultural Revolution, and how important it was to have images to draw on, whether you were forming a group identity with your friends or trying to look smart for the opposite sex.

### *Tirana, Fashion Capital*

“Even though Romania and Albania are Eastern European countries, they are still in Europe.”

(Liu Debao, interviewee)

One of the obstacles to researching what people actually wore during the Cultural Revolution is lack of unrehearsed and uncontrolled documentary footage. Not only were local filmmakers censored, but also only a few trusted “foreign friends” were admitted to make films about China during this period. Even this could go horribly wrong, as the debacle of Antonioni’s *Chung Kuo (Cina, 1972)* demonstrates.<sup>37</sup> Shot at the very beginning of the 1970s, most of the people who appear in the film are wearing predictably plain clothing. However, Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan’s documentary *How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, shot only a couple of years after *Chung Kuo* and released in 1976, shows something different. One of its twelve episodes of varying length is shot in Shanghai, the focus of our research. Two of the younger women who work in the drug store depicted in “The Pharmacy: Shanghai” wear brightly coloured chiffon neck scarves and brightly patterned padded winter jackets. The collars of their blouses have contrasting patterns showing at the top of the jackets. One woman’s bobbed hair appears slightly back-combed to give it a bit of height. It is impossible to know whether they dressed like this on a regular basis, whether they had decided to put their best on for the cameras, or whether the authorities had decided this would be the best way to present the women of Shanghai to foreign audiences. In the opening scenes of the episode, set on the streets of Shanghai, almost everyone is wearing either work clothes or a variant on the indigo blue “Mao suit,” and the women have simple bobs or braids. In fact, the back-combed look only appears once among the women on the streets. At a shop selling candies, a customer also has back-combed big hair. There are no curled perms or other more elaborate styles. Ms. Chen in our first group of interviewees recalled that “permed hair was bourgeois” at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution era. However, as a group they agreed that between 1973 and 1975 women began

perming their hair again. “By 1974 or 1975, they stopped criticizing women for getting perms,” Ms. Liu Yutian said.

Although we cannot be certain about how spontaneous and unrehearsed the scenes in the pharmacy episode of *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* are, we can be sure that chiffon scarves and back-combed hair were not appropriated from model operas or revolutionary war films. Where, then, do ideas like this come from? And when women started to even perm their hair, what style could they have had in mind, since perms had disappeared altogether for several years? Here, cinema almost certainly played a key role, as it was almost the only mass medium to make alternative fashion visible to the public during the Cultural Revolution. Andrew Higson has noted that the consumption of foreign films needs to be studied as an important factor in the construction and development of national cultures.<sup>38</sup> China’s international isolation including its disputes with the Soviet Union and its allies meant that most foreign cinema was not available. However, rarity made those foreign films that were screened all the more popular. According to Paul Clark, when the North Korean film *The Flower Seller* (*Mai hua guniang*) was released in Beijing in 1972, audiences lined up around the block and a new record was achieved for foreign films. Clark goes on to explain that thirty-six of the seventy feature films released in China between 1966 and 1976 were foreign.<sup>39</sup>

Although our interviewees reported enjoying North Korean films for the songs and the emotions, they did not look to them to build their repertoire of fashion possibilities.<sup>40</sup> As Liu Debao commented in our interview with him and his wife, “Shanghai people are most interested in adopting European things.” However, at this time “Europe” meant films from those Eastern European countries with which the People’s Republic of China was still on good terms: on occasion Yugoslavia, but more commonly Romania and Albania. “Even though Romania and

Albania are Eastern European countries,” Liu Debao commented, “they are still in Europe.” Cut off from images of Paris, Tirana substituted as an unlikely fashion capital.

To help trigger memories, we showed a clip from Dhimeter Anagnosti’s film, *Plagë të Vjetra* (*Old Wounds*, 1968, Chinese title: *Chuangshang*). In it, the lead character, a doctor called Vera, appears crossing an open space in the city. A close-up of her hurrying feet focuses attention on her leather shoes with pointed toes. She walks to her office in the hospital and takes her coat off. We also notice that she has back-combed bouffant hair. A number of the women in our second interview group recognized the film from the clip immediately. “Everyone remembered that hairdo of hers,” said Ms. Lu, “It was back-combed and looked very cool. I remember I heard some men talking about it. They thought that hairstyle looked very good, very attractive.” (See Figure 5) Liu Debao reported that the film was particularly popular with young women, who went to see it because of the clothes. “We counted that the young woman doctor had more than twenty changes of outfit in the film!” he claimed (although we are not sure there are really quite that many!)

Figure 5. Vera with big hair in *Old Wounds*.

However, although it is clear that everyone was interested in what people wore in Europe and even felt able to say that they liked it, this does not mean they adopted those fashions immediately. “Oh, no, when I was young we couldn’t have our hair like that,” Ms. Lu said. “At that time women all had braids or short hair. I’d started working in 1968. The men at work all said her hair looked great. You had to perm your hair first, then fluff it, and back comb after that. If you don’t perm straight hair, usually you can’t sweep it back like that.” She and other

interviewees explained that perms only started to become available again in Shanghai around 1974, and that not many hair salons could do perms at the time. “I’d leave work around two in the afternoon and then line up. I wouldn’t get home until evening. The young hairdressers in the salon didn’t know how to do perms, only the older ones who’d done it before.” Ms. Lu’s account shows that she paid close attention to the hair fashions in European films like *Old Wounds*, but that she didn’t feel able to try them. Even the more toned-down version seen in *The Pharmacy* is rare.

On the other hand, if back-combed big hair was a bit too much for the early 1970s, dresses of the kind regularly seen in Albanian and Romanian movies were not. Liu Debao reported seeing mannequins with dresses in the window of Shanghai’s no.1 department store in the early 1970s. Even though all screened foreign films had been passed by the censors, that did not mean it was necessarily being held up as a model for emulation. Rather, the approval of a foreign film for release inside China seems to have indicated something that *might* be approved for local adoption, and that is why the films were so exciting for young people. However, other local signs of that approval were needed first. The appearance of dresses on shop window mannequins was one such sign. Film also played a part in circulating these new possibilities.

Liu Debao remembered a report that Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, had been quoted saying that women could “dress more colourfully” around that time. “There were lots of different types,” he said of the dresses that appeared in the department store window, “but one of them was collarless. When the national leaders met foreign guests, first Jiang Qing appeared wearing it, and then of course many older cadres, such as Kang Keqing and Deng Yingchao,<sup>41</sup> would wear it. At that time every time we went to the movies there were newsreel films.” Presumably, if Jiang Qing had appeared wearing a back-combed bouffant hairstyle, that would also have signalled young



women were free to adopt it. Liu went on to say that everyone also paid close attention to what Chinese athletes and performers wore when they were overseas, as shown in the movie theatre. He cited the example of the eighteen different outfits worn by Yang Chunxia in the documentary he saw in 1974 about the Chinese Opera Troupe's visit to Algeria to perform *Azalea Mountain*.

When Jiang Qing and her faction fell from power after Mao's death, the "collarless" dress became known as the "Jiang Qing Dress," and was much disparaged.<sup>42</sup> However, our interviewees insisted that this appellation was unknown before the end of the Cultural Revolution. Furthermore, dresses re-introduced to the public by examples seen in foreign films and those endorsed by Jiang Qing were very popular with the young women of Shanghai. It has been reported that the dresses endorsed by Jiang Qing did not sell well.<sup>43</sup> However, given that few people bought clothes off the rack at the time, this may not be a sign of unpopularity. Liu's wife, Ma Yulan also remembered the dresses in the shop windows. "I think they were very popular. Shanghai girls are very fashion forward. Some people felt they were a bit expensive, and wages weren't high back then, so we bought material and made them ourselves." She went on to explain, "We didn't have cameras back then either, so I took a pencil and paper, and drew it accordingly, then figured out how to make it." What became known later as the "Jiang Qing" dress was also known as the "100-pleat dress," and Ma Yulan's account of complicated process of making the pleats demonstrates a willingness to put in the time that was needed to acquire the latest look.

To what extent this interest in what some might consider to be Western fashion extended beyond Shanghai at this time is difficult to know without conducting further research. However, those of our women interviewees who went down to the countryside observed a strong difference between themselves and the rural women. Part of this difference was based on clothing. They

insisted that the farmers' outfits indicated that if they were interested in foreign films and what people in Tirana wore, it was not because they had any aspiration to dress like that themselves. We have already seen how the differences between real uniforms and copies were signs of family social status during the early days of the Cultural Revolution. Here we see that Shanghai young people were eager to adopt the latest foreign fashions as soon as signs of their endorsement could be found. Their aim in doing so was to continue to draw a clear line between themselves and the farmers, even though in theory they were going down to the countryside with the aim of settling in and learning from the rural population (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Ms. Hang from our first interview group. This photo, in which she wears the style of dress that had recently become fashionable again in the cities, was taken in the summer of 1975, when she was down in the countryside in Anhui Province.

### *Old Movies, New Clothes*

“When I came back to work in Shanghai in 1975, I had a special photo taken for the occasion in which I wore a pleated dress and pointed leather shoes.” (Ms. Jin, interviewee)

The importance of the early and mid-seventies as a transitional period after the high tide of the Cultural Revolution was over had already been highlighted for us when we showed our interviewees the clip from *Azalea Mountain*. Although we used it to provoke memories about the earlier part of the decade, the film itself was one of the second wave of “model work” films, and only released in 1974. When we showed the clip to our first group, their initial interest was in

hairstyle. They told us that the kind of bobbed hair Yang Chunxia wore when she played Ke Xiang became known as the “*Ke Xiang Tou*” (literally “Ke Xiang head”) soon after the film’s release. When we double-checked, they emphasized that the term did not exist before the release of the film, even though the theatre work was performed first in 1973. According to one blog source, when Xie Jin’s *Chunmiao* (1975) was released the year after, the hairstyle worn by Li Xiuming in the eponymous lead role also became popular and known as the “*Chunmiao tou*” (literally “Chunmiao head”).<sup>44</sup> Some of our interviewees were enthusiastic about the *Ke Xiang tou*. Others preferred braids or hair cut shorter than the *Ke Xiang tou*. This was a style they all wore as children and knew as the “*Tong Hua tou*” or “Child Flower Head.”

However, because *Azalea Mountain* was released towards the end of the Cultural Revolution decade, we believe that the discussion of hairstyles and movie stars our clip provoked tells us more about that transitional period when the sober braids or simple bobbed hair favoured for young women at the height of the Cultural Revolution were beginning to give way to a wider range of options again. This also helped to alert us to the possible significance of not only foreign but also Chinese feature films and Chinese alternatives to the military style in the early 1970s. Here we discovered that another kind of retro mode was at work. Just as the military style of the early Cultural Revolution took from the styles displayed in revolutionary war films, our respondents looked back to look forward in other ways in the early 1970s. Once again, cinema formed part of a mental archive of possibilities for them to draw on and deploy as, when and where appropriate and possible.

First, we were quite surprised to find that a number of our female interviewees had photos of themselves in qipao . (See Figure 7) Although heavily associated with the Republican era overthrown by Communism, women continued to wear the qipao on special occasions all the

way up to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Both its Republican associations and its continued wearing are demonstrated by the case of Wang Guangmei, her visit to Indonesia, and her punishment in the early years of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>45</sup>

Figure 7. Ms. Lin from our first group of interviewees in a qipao and her newly permed hair in the early seventies.

Despite the stigma attached to the qipao, the women who brought photos in told us they were from the early 1970s. But they also hastened to add that, although clothing was becoming more varied then, these qipao were made especially for the taking of studio photographs. In our first interview, Ms. Weng Shaofen and Ms. Hang reported making new clothes for themselves using their mother's old qipao, because they like the floral and embroidered fabric. Ms. Ma remembered her mother wearing a qipao before the Cultural Revolution. "We got it out later, when you could wear them again," she explained. "But I was taller than my mother, so I couldn't wear it until I found a classmate to help me make one. It looked great! We used to wear them on the sly when we went to have photos taken!"

Furthermore, the qipao photographs immediately started conversations about films from before 1949. In fact, the *qipao* in a photograph handed around during the first group interview was shorter but less tightly fitted than the ones that were popular in the Republican era and not slit to the thigh, as some participants pointed out. But its collar was compared to that of a particularly favoured qipao seen in the two-part epic, *A Spring River Flows East* (*Yijiang chunshui xiang dong liu*, 1947). Most of our interviewees were too young to have possibly remembered this film from its first release. This reminded us that pre-revolutionary leftist films

continued to be screened through the seventeen years after the 1949 Revolution and before the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, as the interviewees in our first group confirmed. Therefore, the films also informed their mental repertoire of potential clothing and fashion choices. In our second group interview, Ms. Lu's comment that Mr. Shen's false shirt collar was similar to the one worn by the actor Zhao Dan in the 1937 film *Street Angel* further confirmed the screening of these pre-revolutionary films.

As well as our interviewees' memories of pre-revolutionary leftist films that they saw before the start of the Cultural Revolution, some of the new feature films released in the early 1970s after production in the film studios resumed are also of interest here. This is because they were set in the pre-Cultural Revolution era. For example, to trigger conversation with our interview groups, we showed them a composite of very short clips from *The Young Generation* (*Nianqing de yidai*, 1976), itself a remake of a 1965 film with the same name. The title refers to the political struggle for the hearts and minds of the younger generation in Shanghai. At the end of the film, they volunteer to go down to the countryside. In the shots we showed, the women characters wore bobbed hair along with the white blouses and wide skirts with colourful patterns fashionable in Shanghai in the early sixties, when the film was set. One of the male characters wore slacks and a polo shirt. (See Figure 8.) Although we were unable to show Liu Debao and his wife our clips from the film, Mr. Liu remembered it well and claimed that it was very popular when it was released at the end of the Cultural Revolution decade, and it reflected the new fashions of the day so well.

Figure 8. Still from *The Young Generation*

Our interviewees indicated that these fashions from the early sixties were making a comeback well before the release of this particular film. Indeed, Ms. Lu in our second group interview had brought along two photos of herself from 1971, in which she was wearing a blouse, a wide skirt and bobbed hair, almost identical to the characters in *The Young Generation* (see Figure 9). Ms. Jin remembered, “When I came back to work in Shanghai in 1975, I had a special photo taken for the occasion in which I wore a pleated dress and pointed leather shoes.” Among the men, Mr. Cai felt that the polo shirt was still to make its comeback at the time of the film’s release, and came a bit later. “If you did see someone wearing one,” he added, “it meant they had family in Taiwan or Hong Kong, or some sort of foreign connections.” Our interviewees also told us that these more stylish blouses, skirts, T-shirts and so on were still not everyday clothing in the latter years of the Cultural Revolution. Rather, work clothes, Lenin suits, and Mao suits all dominated in these years, much as is seen in the street scenes in *The Pharmacy*.

Figure 9. Ms. Lu in the summer of 1971 at Chenghuang miao, or the Old City God Temple, in Shanghai.

The women in our first group interview indicated that the primary difference between the fashions of the 1970s just before the end of the Cultural Revolution decade and the sixties was not the style. “Crew necks, scallop collars, shirt-style collars, they were all very similar to what was worn before,” Ms. Ma explained. “But the fabric was different,” Ms. Liu Yutian said. “Dacron was popular in the seventies.” In the second group, there was discussion of when Terylene Cotton became available. The fashion forward Mr. Shen remembered wearing a Mao suit made of Terylene Cotton as early as 1972. Furthermore, according to him, memories of films

and memories of what was worn (by parents and older brothers) before the Cultural Revolution also formed an archive to be drawn on when the moment was right. But again, as with adoption of military-style clothing, the adoption of these fashions was not necessarily a deliberate political statement, nor was it necessarily an act of resistance or loyalty. Even though it might have had political connotations, for most of our interviewees, it was part of a more individual drive to look good in front of their contemporaries.

### *Conclusion*

“We didn’t have cameras back then either, so we took a pencil and paper, and drew it accordingly, then figured out how to make it.” (Ma Yulan, interviewee)

Our interviews showed that in Shanghai at least, contrary to common assumptions, young people clearly cared a lot about what they wore, even during the height of the Cultural Revolution. Furthermore, cinema certainly informed their image repertoire of possibilities and options. Although they were constrained by what was considered socially and politically acceptable, they exerted agency in the choices they made within those constraints. Although the military uniform culture was dominant during this period, especially in the early period, it was neither monotonous nor exclusive. On the one hand, our interviewees indicated that their reasons for adopting military uniform and the way they tailored their uniforms included reasons that went beyond the loyalty and nostalgia for revolutionary heroism that mainstream culture promoted. On the other hand, they retained and actively developed a much wider fashion image repertoire that drew on both foreign films, memories of old films they had seen before the Cultural

Revolution, and new films set in the recent past. And when the social and political constraints were relaxed, they drew on these images to venture in new directions. As discussed in the introduction to this essay, if this is true during this limit case period of 1966-1976, it was probably true of the whole Maoist era, from 1949 to Mao's death in 1976.

Furthermore, these explorations into fashion and choice during the Cultural Revolution era also connect to questions about how we should think about individual agency during eras repudiated as either totalitarian or chaotic. Instead of contrasting a notion of absolute individual freedom with oppression in a simple binary fashion that serves to legitimate the present rather than produce meaningful knowledge of the past, perhaps we need to acknowledge that even under the most politically and culturally difficult conditions, agency continues to exist in the interstices of everyday life. This is not to erase difference, but rather to suggest that we need to think of agency in a different way: as a relationship between various institutions, interests, groups, forces, and individuals, whereby each finds itself able to act in certain ways. What needs further elucidation is how one could act when, where and why. It is clear that during the high point of the Cultural Revolution the range of clothing choices was very limited. But even then, the conditions of production guaranteed a high degree of individual adjustment within the very narrow range available. And dressing within that narrow range did not mean individuals did so for the reasons preferred by the state, the party, and other dominant players of the time, or that they had forgotten other possibilities, or that they were not eagerly seeking out new possibilities that they might choose to adopt in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> The research this paper reports on was funded by a mini-grant from the University of Nottingham, Ningbo campus. The Chinese-language version of this paper was previously published in *ACT Magazine (Yishu Guandian)* no.54 (2013): 46-64. We are also grateful to all our interviewees for their generosity. This essay is dedicated to them.

<sup>2</sup> Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 196.



- <sup>3</sup> Jeff Wasserstrom opens his book on Shanghai with a quote from a 1934 guide book proclaiming the city not only as the “Paris of the East,” but also as the “New York of the West”: Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai, 1850-2010: A History in Fragments* (New York: Routledge, 2009): 1.
- <sup>4</sup> Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, ed., *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
- <sup>5</sup> For example, Pam Cook, *Fashioning the Nation: Costume and Identity in British Cinema* (London: BFI, 1996).
- <sup>6</sup> For example, Sarah Street, *Costume and Cinema: Dress Codes in Popular Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
- <sup>7</sup> Discussed, for example, in Tina Mai Chen, “Dressing for the Party: Clothing, Citizenship, and Gender Formation in Mao’s China,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 5, no.2 (2001):143-4.
- <sup>8</sup> Judd Stitzel, *Fashioning Socialism: Clothing, Politics, and Consumer Culture in East Germany* (New York: Berg, 2005).
- <sup>9</sup> Tina Mai Chen, 147.
- <sup>10</sup> Iris Hopf, “Der ‘Mao-Anzug’: Kleidung in der Kulturrevolution,” in *Die Kultur der Kulturrevolution: Personenkult und Politisches Design im China von Mao Zedong*, edited by Helmut Opletal (Vienna: Museums für Völkerkunde Wien -- Kunsthistorische Museum, 2011): 183.
- <sup>11</sup> Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008): 204-5
- <sup>12</sup> Yuezhi Zhao, *Media, Market and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998): 19.
- <sup>13</sup> The guiding text in these matters was Mao Zedong’s 1943 *Talks at the Yan’an Conference on Literature and Art*, trans. Bonnie S. McDougall (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies Publications, 1980).
- <sup>14</sup> Chen: 155.
- <sup>15</sup> Antonia Finnane (2008), 234. In our second group interview, Mr. Wang spontaneously confirmed this during a conversation about the trend for military-style clothing.
- <sup>16</sup> Wang Hui, *China’s New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003): 76.
- <sup>17</sup> Alain Badiou and Alessandro Russo, “International Center for the Study of the Cultural Revolution: Elements of a Project,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, no.4 (2006): 701.
- <sup>18</sup> See for example the work collected in the “Alain Badiou and Cultural Revolution” issue of *Positions: east asia cultures critique* 13, no.3 (2005); Roderick McFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 2008); Mobo Gao, *The Battle for China’s Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2008); and Yang Su, *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- <sup>19</sup> Verity Wilson, “Dress and the Cultural Revolution,” in *China Chic*, edited by Valerie Steele and John S. Major (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999): 167-8.
- <sup>20</sup> Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1988): 65.
- <sup>21</sup> Finnane (2008), 227-8.
- <sup>22</sup> All interviewees were informed about the nature of the research project in advance, and advised that we would guarantee their anonymity. However, none indicated any desire for anonymity or gave us any pseudonyms, although we asked them to. Where a full name appears, this indicates an interviewee who has specifically given us permission to use their full name and asked us to do so.
- <sup>23</sup> Wilson, 168.
- <sup>24</sup> For a discussion of “internal reference films” during the Cultural Revolution, see Yan Chunjun, “The Era of Spectacle in Cinema and Media: Perspective on the Cinema of the Cultural Revolution” (*Dianying Chuanbo de Qiguan Shida: Wenge Dianying de Guancha Jiaodu*) *Xiandai Chuanbo (Modern Communication)*, 2010, no. 1: 62-63.
- <sup>25</sup> We showed these clips to each of the large groups, but our interview circumstances did not give us a chance to show them to Liu Debao and Ma Yulan.
- <sup>26</sup> For a list of feature films produced during the Cultural Revolution, see Zhai Jiannong, *The Red Past: Chinese Films during 1966-1976* (Beijing: Taihai Press, 2001): 477-479. Also see, “Films Made and Released during the Cultural Revolution” (*Wenge Shiqi Fangying he Paishi de Dianying*), at *Listening to the Rain’s Blog (Ting Yu de BLOG)*, [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_4e7807550100psr.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4e7807550100psr.html), accessed 27 September 2011, which lists these two films as screened throughout the Cultural Revolution, although no source is given for this information.
- <sup>27</sup> The original reads: 飒爽英姿五尺枪 曙光初照练兵场, 中华儿女多奇志 不爱红装爱武装. Finnane gives *Mao Zhuxi Shici*, [www.szxy.org/news/003y/312/maozedong110/mzd.htm](http://www.szxy.org/news/003y/312/maozedong110/mzd.htm) as her source (accessed by us 21 August 2011),

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and this website gives February 1961 as the date of the original. This translation is not Finnane's, but Jerome Chen's from *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965),: 352, cited in Tina Mai Chen, 162. Dagmar Borchard uses the German translation as the epigraph for her article, "China Goes Fashion: Chinas Modedesigner im Aufbruch," *Das Neue China* 2010, no.1 (2010): 8. Iris Hopf has a photograph of a teapot inscribed with the saying, as well as a picture of a uniformed young woman with her rifle: Iris Hopf, 185.

<sup>28</sup> Compare also Chen's description on the back cover of a 1961 edition of *Popular Cinema*, 159.

<sup>29</sup> Georg Simmel, "Fashion," *International Quarterly*, 10, no.1 (1904), 139.

<sup>30</sup> Finnane (2008), 230.

<sup>31</sup> Rae Yang, *Spider Eaters: A Memoir* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 122, cited in Finnane (2008), 234.

<sup>32</sup> Chen, 156.

<sup>33</sup> Wilson, 175

<sup>34</sup> Wilson also pointed out that the sense of fashion during Cultural Revolution was limits-conscious, because "they put limits, never otherwise practically spelled out, on what was acceptable clotheswise," Wilson, 171.

<sup>35</sup> Hopf, 189.

<sup>36</sup> Chen, 159. Although Chen is not writing specifically about the Cultural Revolution here, this comment goes along with our interviewees' comments.

<sup>37</sup> For the denunciation of the film, see "Repudiating Antonioni's Anti-China Film," *Peking Review* 1974, no.8 (22 February 1974): 13-16. For further analysis, see Sun Hongyun, "Two China? Joris Ivens' *Yukong* and Antonioni's *China*," *Studies in Documentary Film* 3, no.1 (2009): 45-59.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen* 30, no.4 (1989): 39-43.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 151.

<sup>40</sup> This contrasts with an experience Berry had more than ten years ago in Beijing. Browsing in a shop soon after North Korean films had been rereleased on VCD, he got chatting to some middle-aged women who were surprised that a foreigner was interested in North Korean films. Asked why she they were popular back then, she reminded him that North Korea was an advanced socialist country then, and she was interested in anything from North Korea because she knew that what they were wearing in Pyongyang this year, she would be wearing next year.

<sup>41</sup> Kang Keqing was the wife of revolutionary military hero Zhu De, who was also vice-Chairman of the Communist Party of China, until his dismissal at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Deng Yingchao was Premier Zhou Enlai's wife. Both women had political roles of their own. Jiang Qing was, of course, Mao's wife, and an active leader during the Cultural Revolution era.

<sup>42</sup> Antonia Finnane has undertaken a very thorough analysis of the "Jiang Qing Dress" and its history in "Looking for the Jiang Qing Dress: Some Preliminary Findings," *Fashion Theory* 9, no.1 (2005): 3-22. Finnane indicates that although its collar was minimal, it did exist as a wide neckband, and resembled the collar on a Buddhist monk's robe.

<sup>43</sup> Finnane (2005), 11.

<sup>44</sup> "On the 'Ke Xiang Tou' and the 'Chunmiao Tou'" (*Huashuo 'Ke Xiang Tou' he 'Chunmiao Tou'*), at *On Old Movie (and Movie People)* blog (*Huashuo Lao Dianying [Lao Yingren]*), posted 27 July 2009, [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_4bf92e850100pjah.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4bf92e850100pjah.html), accessed 27 September 2011.

<sup>45</sup> For further analysis of the qipao and its history, see Finnane (2008), chapter 6, 139-176; Bao Mingxin and Ma Li, eds, *Zhongguo qipao* (China's qipao), (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenhua Chubanshe, 1998); and Hazel Clark, *The Cheongsam*, (Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, 2000).